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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A PERFORMANCE STUDY GUIDE TO
ROBERT STARER'S EVANESCENTS FOR PIANO

BY

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I. INTRODUCTION

The performance of twentieth-century music presents new challenges on various levels for the performer. One's approach, often intuitively taken towards music of the past, requires alteration when applied to the music of this century. Often one must learn to read new notation, feel irregular rhythms, and become accustomed to hearing atonal melodies and harmonies. In addition, contemporary music may require special effects produced by new techniques peculiar to a specific instrument.

In the initial stages of interpretation, therefore, the performer must interpret and articulate what the printed score aurally represents. Twentieth-century music sometimes requires a level of technical proficiency on the performer's part which extends beyond that required in the performance of traditional music.

Once the technical details of a composition have been mastered, the greatest challenge lies in the interpretation and presentation of the work as a whole. The success of the presentation is measured by the performer's ability to amalgamate "a musical conception, rhythmically and aurally grouped, . . . with the physical action required to produce that conception,"¹ and, in so doing, present an absolutely

¹Max W. Camp, Developing Piano Performance: A Teaching Philosophy (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1981), p. 8.

convincing performance to an audience which is often unfamiliar with the twentieth-century repertoire.

Such a challenge is presented in the performance of Evanescents (1975), a composition for solo piano. Written by Robert Starer (1924 -), an American composer of Austrian birth, Evanescents is an eclectic work reflecting Starer's European background, his Middle-Eastern studies, and his exposure to American jazz. It immediately engages the listener's interest by combining impressionistic and oriental lyricisms with rhythmic vitality generated by the influence of Arab folk music and American jazz. It is an excellent study in the use of contemporary techniques because it places unusual interpretive and technical demands on the performer.

The purpose of this essay is to provide the performer with possible interpretive and technical approaches to an effective communication of the music.

II. BACKGROUND

A. The Composer

Robert Starer was born on January 8, 1924, in Vienna, Austria. As part of the "Jewish Bourgeoise,"² a group which supported cultural activities in Vienna, Starer's family provided him with an intellectually stimulating environment. At an early age Starer began his musical studies with instruction in piano. Improvisation came easily to him; he could often be found practising his improvisational skills rather than preparing for his lessons. In 1937 his formal education began with piano studies at the State Academy in Vienna. These studies, however, were disrupted by the political upheavals taking place in Europe. In the following year, the Germans invaded Austria, quickly prompting the departure of many Austrian families. Within a short period of time, Starer and his family were separated.

Starer was sent to Israel where he entered the Jerusalem Conservatory on scholarship to study piano and composition. His major teachers, including Josef Tal, Solomon Rosowsky (a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov), and Odeon Partos (a pupil of Kodaly), expressed their continued support and respect for the talent of this gifted young composer and pianist. A more informal

²Dorothy Ellen Lewis, "The Major Piano Solo Works of Robert Starer; A Style Analysis" (D.M.A. dissertation, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1978), pp. 11-12.

teacher outside the Conservatory was Esva Aharoni, an Arab folk musician, who taught Starer to play the oud, an Arabic predecessor of the lute. This association proved to be a very influential force in Starer's musical studies as he later incorporated the quarter-tone scales and polyrhythms of Arabic folk music into his own compositions.

In 1947 Starer came to the United States³ to continue his musical studies at the Juilliard School of Music in New York with Frederic Jacobi, a pupil of Ernest Bloch. He graduated in 1949, receiving a Post-Graduate Diploma, and joined the faculty in the same year. He later taught at the New York College of Music and the Jewish Theology Seminary before accepting an appointment as professor of composition at the Brooklyn College School of Performing Arts in 1963, a position he has held for the past twenty-three years. His compositions, which include works for orchestra, band, opera, ballet, chorus, chambermusic ensemble, and instrumental solo, have received international recognition. They are included not only in the repertoire of major orchestras, but also in that of solo performers and pedagogues.

His musical style has been described as "direct in expression, using dissonance coherently within clear forms,"⁴ and is noted "for its thematic eloquence, compact form and

³Starer became an American citizen in 1957.

⁴Bruce Archibald, "Starer, Robert," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians 18(1980), 78.

rhythmic energy."⁵ His musical language, which incorporates the melodic and rhythmic devices of Middle-Eastern orientalism and American jazz, reflects exposure during his early years to three very different cultures. His style also bridges a large time span: the old is restated in terms of the new. Starer uses folk elements of ancient melodic and rhythmic modes in the context of twentieth-century harmonic and compositional techniques.

Dorothy Lewis perhaps best describes Starer's musical style in relation to other composers.⁶ Starer's music, like Debussy's, is notable for its attention to sound contexts, and his works often bear the impressionistic qualities of the earlier composer. He uses the harmonic tools of composers such as Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, though he is not a strict serialist. Like Hindemith's works, Starer's compositions often appear to have an indeterminate tonal beginning and apparently do not establish a tonality until the final cadence is reached. An outstanding feature of his music is rhythmic vitality. Like Stravinsky and Bartók, Starer generates excitement in his works through his use of rhythm. His works alternate percussive driving rhythms with jazz-like syncopations. Frequent changes of time signature

⁵Oscar Thompson, The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians, 9th edition edited by Robert Sabin (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1964), p. 2094.

⁶Lewis elaborates more fully on this subject in Chapter II of her dissertation, pp. 23-36.

and beat duration prevent the performer and the listener from being lulled by regularity. Finally, like Cage (though not to such an extreme degree), Starer invites the performer to take part in the composition of the work. The length of certain phrase-endings is "determined by the performer's mood of the moment, by his sense of drama."⁷

Starer has written a considerable number of piano compositions for solo, duet, and duo-piano performance. Among his major orchestral works are three Piano Concertos, all of which are considered demanding works. The First Piano Concerto, written in 1947 and performed with the composer as soloist on February 21, 1949, was the first Starer composition to be presented to the American public. The Third Piano Concerto, written in 1972, was described in reviews as "the product of a highly inventive musical mind with superb control of sophisticated musical materials,"⁸ and a work which offered "substantial challenges to the pianist who must alternate between percussive, lyrical, and jazzy idioms."⁹

His major solo piano works, in addition to Evanescents, include two Piano Sonatas written in 1949 and 1965, respec-

⁷Alan and Nancy Mandel, "Composers to Re-emphasize; Six Americans Who Should Not Be Forgotten," Clavier 14 (April 1975), 14-17.

⁸"Symphony Gives World Premiere," The Evening Sun, Baltimore, Maryland, 11 October 1974, cited by Lewis, p. 7.

⁹"May Day," (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), cited by Lewis, p. 7.

tively. These pieces are demanding works which "have rapid, motor-like passages, and angular, rhythmically free sections, with quickly changing dynamics, and which pass suddenly through all ranges of the keyboard."¹⁰ The first Sonata is written in a traditional, three-movement form, while Sonata No. 2, like Evanescents, is a sectional, one-movement work.

Starer has also composed piano works for children and students. These pieces serve as excellent studies in the techniques and sounds of the twentieth century. Like the larger piano works, these smaller pieces bear the characteristics of Starer's unique style from the jazz syncopations in "Bright Orange" from Sketches in Color (1963) to the Hebraic melodies and harmonies of Five Preludes for Piano (1952).

B. The Work

Evanescents was written in the early months of 1975. Its first performance, which took place on January 11, 1976, was given by Dorothy Lewis, to whom the work is dedicated. The following review of the work appeared in The Atlanta Journal the next day:

The 11-minute piece is immediately appealing, moving from stately rhythmic moments to a kind of lulling lyricism.

Starer sets a mood of the Middle East in one section and offsets this later with some compelling jazz styles. Evanescents

¹⁰Lewis, p. 27.

is expertly written for the piano, and deserves to be played often.¹¹

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines the term evanescent as "vanishing, fleeting, impermanent." Such is the character and sound evoked by Starer's composition. About his choice of title, the composer said: "Evanescents as a title is sad, perhaps, but it is true. My approach to form has changed through Evanescents (living from minute to minute). . . ."¹² Justly named, the work alternates between rapid, metered sections and slow, senza misura sections, with sudden ff tone clusters and melodic lines rising from and disappearing into ppp depths.

Evanescents is a one-movement work developed in the form of a giant fantasy. It is characterized by a constant "stream of ideas, put together in a collage manner, which Starer implies when he says the title means 'living from minute to minute.'"¹³ The work consists of many contrasting, yet interlocking smaller sections which are clearly identified by changes in tempo, meter, dynamics, and mood. The work is unified by the recurrence of entire sections, usually in a varied and extended form, as well as by the recurrence of motives or short passages from section to section.

¹¹"Mrs. Griffith Gives Excellent Recital," The Atlanta Journal 12 January 1976, cited by Lewis, p. 139.

¹²Robert Starer to Dorothy Lewis, personal letter, 28 July 1975, cited by Lewis, pp. 145-146.

¹³Lewis, p. 91.

The work can be divided into the following four large sections:

Section I	:	ss. 1,m.1 - 30,m.1 ¹⁴
Link	:	ss.31,m.1 - 32,m.1
Section II	:	ss.32,m.2 - 55,m.1
Section III	:	ss.55,m.2 - 76,m.1
Link	:	ss.76,m.2 - 79,m.1
Section IV (Epilogue):	:	ss.79,m.2 - 90,m.4

The climax is reached, both rhythmically and dynamically, at the end of Section III. Its placement, therefore, gives the work an irregular type of arch form.

Section I varies greatly in its dynamics, rhythm, meter, and character. It consists of smaller sections written with and without meter, varying in dynamic level from ppp to ff. The section in $\frac{10}{8}$ meter, marked "Not too fast, with equanimity" (s.13), is particularly interesting in that Starer quotes from his "Concerto for Two Ouds and Orchestra," an unpublished work written during his student days in Israel. This particular quotation has Arabic origins with its use of the Samai rhythm and the Bayathi scale. Starer's use of minor seconds suggests the quarter-tones of the Arabic folk mode. This section, with its strong underlying rhythm, contrasts with the slow, unmetered beginning. The sounds that Starer projects in Section I are also greatly varied, from the impressionistic opening to the brittle quality of the "Moderate,

¹⁴The following abbreviations will be used throughout this essay:

s. (plural - ss.) - system(s)
m. (plural - mm.) - measure(s)

with *éclat*" section (s.10) to the poignant lyricism of the section marked "Dolefully" (s.23).

Section II presents a more structured rhythmical organization than Section I. Two sets of alternating meter are generally used, that of $\frac{5}{8}$ with $\frac{4}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ with $\frac{8}{8}$. A steady pulse and constant use of a staccato touch help to unify this section.

Section III is also strongly rhythmic resulting from the use of jazz syncopations. It contains passages, in varied form, from previous sections which serve to unify the work. The "Dolefully" passage from Section I (s.23) and the passage of alternating $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{8}{8}$ meter (s.38) from Section II, for example, both appear as part of Section III (ss.64-65). The work climaxes with the extended use of tone clusters in the $\frac{6}{8} / \frac{8}{8}$ alternating pattern leading to a dynamic level of fff in s.76.

The final section serves as an Epilogue to the work. Written in a slow blues style, it rejects the percussiveness of Section III and instead focuses on the quiet lyricism of the jazz idiom. Its melody hovers for the most part between the dynamic levels of mp and ppp before finally disappearing altogether.

Unity is achieved in the work through the recurrence of motives, phrases, and passages which serve both as developmental material and as links between sections. The following motives, for example, are initially presented in ss.2 and 4

and later reappear in the work:

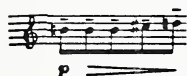
Ex. 1a: s.2



Ex. 1b: s.4



Ex. 1c: s.4



Ex. 1d: s.4



The first motive (Ex. 1a), which later appears in ss.31 and 32, serves as the link between Sections I and II. It retains the meterless quality of the first section while suggesting the staccato character of the following section. An extended form of the second motive (Ex. 1b) in s.10 links the "Very slow, with pathos" section to the section marked "Moderate, with éclat." The third motive (Ex. 1c) later appears in ss.12 and 22 as a link to the following sections. Lastly, the fourth motive (Ex. 1d), a tone cluster with an upward second resolution, is repeated with increasing insistence at the end of S.51 before leading to the section marked "Moderate, with éclat."

An extended passage between the climax of Section III

and the Epilogue (s.76,m.2 - s.79,m.1) is perhaps the most important link in the work. It unifies the piece through retrospection of previous motives, phrases, and passages, particularly those of the opening. Lyricism is reintroduced into the melody accompanied by impressionistic tone clusters and a pp dynamic level in preparation for the lyrical blues style of the Epilogue. Finally, the precise spacing of notes, the subtle grading of dynamics, and appropriate attention to tempo changes produce effects which reinforce the meaning of the title.

While a background examination reveals close relationships between sections of the work, a study of the foreground also demonstrates a unified musical language. Evanescents is steeped in chromaticism, all twelve notes being introduced within the tone clusters of the first system.

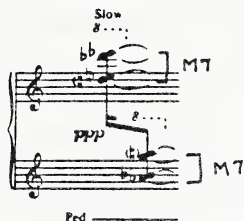
Lewis describes Starer's tonal organization as "centric," meaning "organized in terms of [a] tone center."¹⁵ Though generally all twelve notes are used with equal consideration, the note E appears to be the primary tonal center with the note C acting as a secondary focus. Though the opening of the work appears tonally ambiguous, the tonality of E is firmly established at the end.

An examination of the melodic and harmonic patterns of

¹⁵ Arthur Berger, "Stravinsky," Perspectives of New Music, edited by Benjamin Boretz and Edward Cone (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 123, cited by Lewis, p. 58.

the twelve notes shows that Starer uses the interval of a second with its inversions and compounds as the basic building tool for his composition. The first tone clusters sounded by the right and left hands at the beginning of the work are composed of major seconds written a major seventh apart.

Ex. 2: s.1



When two of these four-note clusters are sounded simultaneously in s.4, not only is each composed of major seconds and sevenths, but together they are written a major seventh apart.

Ex. 3: s.4



Many other examples of tone clusters built in this manner are found throughout the work.

As well as using seconds vertically, Starer also uses them horizontally in his motives and melodies. The linking motives cited in Example 1 consist of rising major and minor

seconds. Major and minor seconds are also used in the melody of the "Dolefully" section (s.23) and lend themselves well to the character of this section.

There is an emphasis, though to a lesser degree, on the intervals of the major and minor third. Such an example is the emphatic inner melodic line of the left hand in the section marked "Moderate, with *éclat*" (s.10). In s.12,m.2, the section concludes with a succession of falling major thirds in the left hand. Major and minor thirds are also juxtaposed in an obvious manner in the Epilogue.

Finally, Starer's tonal organization suggests the use of certain scalar patterns and modes. In s.21, Lewis points to the use of a transposed modal scale and the pentatonic scale when the notes of each hand are considered separately.¹⁶

Ex. 4a: s.21



¹⁶Lewis, p. 81.

Ex. 4b: Lewis's analysis



Both the Arabic Bayathi and the octatonic scales are incorporated into the work. The former may be found in the "Not too fast, with equanimity" section beginning in s.13, with minor seconds substituting for quarter-tones. The latter scale is used in the melodic material at the beginning of Section II.

Ex. 5: ss.32-33



III. THE PERFORMANCE STUDY GUIDE

A. Rhythmic Organization

The excitement and vitality of Evanescents are largely due to the emphasis placed on rhythm and its organization. Rhythm is an important key to the successful performance of any composition, but particularly in works of the twentieth century where rhythm "[functions] noisily as part of the musical foreground."¹⁷ It is essential, therefore, that the performer understand the rhythmic structure of a work since "a considerable part of what is usually called 'interpretation' depends upon the performer's sensitivity to and awareness of [this] structure."¹⁸ An examination of the rhythmic organization and flexibility of Evanescents, considering the elements of tempo and meter in particular, demonstrates that rhythm is one of the major forces which sustains this composition.

Tempi in Evanescents vary from "Very slow, with pathos" to "Very fast, nimbly." Although tempo changes generally articulate formal divisions, they may also occur within sections and phrases, as in ss.50-51. Since specific metronome markings are not provided, tempi are relative

¹⁷Walther Dürr, Walter Gerstenberg, and Jonathan Harvey, "Rhythm," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians 15(1980), 819.

¹⁸Grosvenor W. Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, The Rhythmic Structure of Music (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 1, cited by Camp, p. 4.

and dependent upon the discretion of the performer as guided by the composer's suggestions. It is important, therefore, that the performer always view the work in totality and keep tempi in relation to each other. The extended passage (ss.76-79) linking Sections III and IV, for example, should be played at a tempo which recalls that of the opening since the material of this passage is reminiscent of previous material rather than developmental.

The choice of tempo is dependent upon the performer's ability to maintain forward motion and clarity of line. The tempo chosen in the "Very slow, with pathos" section (s.5), for example, must not inhibit the flow of the line. Despite the broadness of the triplets, the musical thought must carry across the bar line. The fast tempi of Sections II and III should allow for clarity of rhythm and melodic line, particularly of the triplets in the latter section (ss.59-60).

In most instances one tempo should be maintained throughout a section unless otherwise noted. This means that certain passages which make several appearances throughout the work should conform to each new tempo. The thirty-second note passage of the opening (ss.1-2), for example, should be played in later appearances first at a slower tempo (ss.6-7) and then at a faster tempo (ss.21-22) than that of the original. Similarly, the tempo marking of "Fast" should be observed through s.64 even though this material recalls that of the "Dolefully" passage in Section I.

Although it is necessary to maintain steady tempi throughout much of the work, rhythmic flexibility in the form of rubato may be used to enhance the lyrical quality of certain lines. When used in the section marked "Dolefully" (s.23), rubato allows time for the clear articulation and lyricism of the thirty-second notes while also encouraging the forward motion of the melodic line from beat three to beat one of the next measure.

Ex. 6: ss.23-24



As an element also common to the jazz idiom, rubato enhances the lyrical blues style of the Epilogue. The grace notes (ss.79-80), which allude to the blue notes of the jazz style, must be articulated clearly.

Certain phrase-endings in the composition require flexibility of tempo through the use of the ritardando. Particular attention should be given to the molto ritardando in m.2 of s.50. It serves to bridge the tempo change from "Very fast, nimbly" to "Slow." The poco ritardando found in s.76 intensifies the dramatic effect of the climax as the sound increases to a fff dynamic level. Though not always notated, the use of ritardando is also appropriate

to certain phrase-endings. For example, if extra time is taken just prior to the "Dolefully" section (s.23), the character change from the previous section is more easily communicated. The final phrase of the work (s.90) may also benefit from a poco ritardando as the last flickerings of sound disappear.

Another time adjustment, in the form of the fermata, is made for dramatic purposes. The fermata placed after the thirty-second-note passage in s.2, for example, allows the collection of sound to dissipate. It serves as the pivotal point between the thirty-second-note passage, which emphasizes sound clusters, and the following single-note melodic line. The length of the fermata is dependent upon the amount of energy given to the preceding passage and the time needed for the sound to disappear. Its length, therefore, will vary in each performance, depending not only upon the performer's approach, but also upon the acoustics of the piano and the space in which it is placed.

A more dramatic use of the fermata occurs after the climax has been reached. A pause is placed at the end of Section III (s.76) where a dynamic level of fff has been reached and the tempo has slowed. This period of silence sustains the suspense and intensity of the work. The listener is given time to absorb the drama of the preceding section while the performer prepares for the character change of the following passage. The importance of this

fermata is emphasized by the accompanying indication of long.

Brief pauses, or breaths, which are not notated in the score may be taken before new sections. Such a pause taken before the "Moderate, with éclat" section (s.10) gives the performer time to adjust to the following character change and permits him to prepare physically for the f declamatory writing style. A quick breath may also be taken within a passage, particularly after a climactic moment has been reached. A breath before m.1 of s.45, for example, increases the effectiveness of the subito pp while again allowing the performer time for physical preparation.

The work is characterized by two styles of notation: metered and unmetered. The majority of music written without meter occurs in Section I with metered writing interspersed throughout the work. Though a time signature is absent from certain passages in the first section, a clear rhythmical pulse must be present at all times. It is, in turn, organized into some type of measured grouping. In the "Slow" section of the beginning (s.1), the sixteenth note is used as the basic rhythmical pulse. Its organization within the first four verticalizations is that of 3 + 3 + 3 + 4. The passage may be given both rhythmic and melodic direction by placing a slight emphasis on the first sixteenth note of each group.

Certain ambiguities, resulting from the lack of meter,

are present in the score, and may be approached by the performer in various ways. For example, in s.4, the score does not clearly indicate when the right-hand notes E \sharp and D \sharp should be played.

Ex. 7: s.4



The performer may choose to play them immediately, that is, one sixteenth-note value after the left-hand notes, releasing the B \sharp and C \sharp after the E \sharp and D \sharp have sounded. Alternatively, one may choose to withhold the right-hand notes for a dotted eighth-note value, thus allowing the left-hand notes to be played and sustained. The B \sharp may then be released before the right-hand notes enter.

In general, passages written with meter are characterized by a stronger rhythmic impetus and a faster tempo. There are extended passages using one meter as well as passages in which alternating meter predominates. An example of the former is the Arabic section ("Not too fast, with equanimity", s.13) in $\frac{10}{8}$ meter. In the first eight measures of this section (ss.13-16), the left-hand eighth notes must maintain a steady pulse. When the lines are inverted in ss.17-19, the right hand maintains the steady eighth-note pulse. While

one hand generates the pulse, the other hand must give attention to the rhythmic direction and energy of the melodic line. These factors are assisted by initiating a drop of the forearm for each slurred grouping. For longer phrase groupings, the forearm drop is followed by forearm rotation. In the following examples, the forearm is rotated towards the note B^{\sharp} , played by the right hand's fifth finger in s.13,m.3 and by the left hand's thumb in s.17,m.2.

Ex. 8a: s.13



Ex. 8b: s.17



The shorter four-beat groupings which directly follow should be played with one impulse of the forearm as it drops and rebounds in preparation for the next grouping. Rhythmic surprises created through the use of staccato and/or accentuated phrase-endings contribute to the energy of the line. The articulation of such phrase-endings may vary with each per-

formance.

Another passage which uses one meter is the initial part of Section III ("Fast", s.55). As in the Arabic section, the left hand maintains a steady beat in the first four measures while the right hand generates rhythmic energy through the articulation of slurred notes and the direction of the melodic line. Again the use of a quick forearm drop and bounce for each pair of slurred notes helps to propel the forward motion of the line. The large leaps in the left hand are accommodated by an initial forearm drop followed by forearm rotation to allow for a legato connection between notes. The same meter is retained for the next five measures (s.56,m.4 - s.57,m.4), a passage which is important for its characteristic use of jazz rhythm.

Ex. 9: ss.56-57



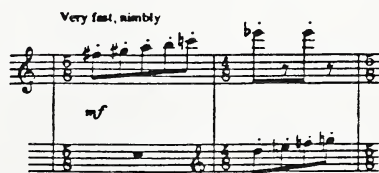
The repeated staccato notes appearing before each slurred note-pair act as an anacrusis to that which follows and may be played with a quick hand-staccato movement. The following syncopated rhythm is enhanced when an emphasis is placed on the first note of each slurred note-pair and the second note is quickly released. The crescendo in m.3 of s.57, however,

should be observed, thus giving emphasis to the last eighth note of the measure.

Another metrical procedure encountered by the performer is that of alternating meters. Section II, for example, makes extensive use of the alternating meters $\frac{5}{8}$ / $\frac{4}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8}$ / $\frac{8}{8}$. Strong rhythmic direction is needed to relay the excitement and intensity of the rhythm. In the $\frac{5}{8}$ / $\frac{4}{8}$ passage, those measures of $\frac{5}{8}$ must act rhythmically and melodically as anacrusis to those measures of $\frac{4}{8}$. Each $\frac{4}{8}$ measure, therefore, functions as a structural "downbeat" because of the body's natural response to regular meter and a simplified pulse, that is, two pulses per measure. The same interpretation applies to the alternating meters $\frac{6}{8}$ / $\frac{8}{8}$ where each $\frac{6}{8}$ measure is perceived as a structural "downbeat" and receives the appropriate emphasis.

Clear melodic definition and a staccato touch within these sections also help to enhance the rhythmic energy. Horizontal movement such as that required in the first two measures of the $\frac{5}{8}$ / $\frac{4}{8}$ metered section (F# to E \flat) necessitates the lateral participation of the arm rather than reliance on the hand alone.

Ex. 10: s.32



The downward motion of the arm helps to deliver the initial impulse to the $\frac{5}{8}$ measure. The arm then assists the hand in its staccato movement leading to the downbeat of the $\frac{4}{8}$ measure.

The octaves occurring in the $\frac{6}{8} / \frac{8}{8}$ measures (ss.35-37) provide a strong rhythmic base and again require the participation of the arm.

Ex. 11: s.35



The staccato octaves of the $\frac{8}{8}$ measure are achieved through an initial downward impulse of the forearm which, together with the hand, accommodates the quick succession of repeated and neighbor notes in one impulse. The following legato octaves are similarly achieved by the quick movement of the hand and arm but with one difference: this time, the fingers remain on the keys after the forearm has dropped and risen in preparation for the following octaves. These octaves require a more flexible wrist to facilitate the effect of a legato connection.

B. Melodic Contour and Definition

In addition to rhythmic direction, strong melodic definition is needed in Evanescents. In some instances the continuity between the hands must be maintained to ensure a carefully shaped, single melodic line. In other instances each hand has its own distinct material. The performer is challenged by the first of these situations in the opening section of the work. In the thirty-second-note passage (ss.1-2), each hand plays two notes of a four-note group. Notwithstanding the major-seventh interval which separates the notes of the right and left hands, each four-note group must be considered and heard as one indivisible unit rather than as two. Continuity is achieved by maintaining a legato connection between the hands without giving emphasis to the third note of each group. A legato touch is achieved through the continuous transfer of arm weight from finger to finger, never allowing the finger to release its key until weight-transfer has occurred and the next key has been depressed.

One line should also be maintained between the hands in the passage directly following the thirty-second notes.

Ex. 12: ss.2



In this passage, unlike the previous one, the single notes are important in creating a horizontal melody rather than a vertical sound cluster. Despite the octave displacements, one line must be created from the first note to the last. This is achieved by maintaining the intensity of the line throughout the bass notes. Considering the mechanics of the piano and the nature of the sound decay, the performer must listen carefully to the sounds produced and match them with each successive note, thus eliminating the occurrence of an uneven line. When this passage recurs in s.77, the same effect must be achieved despite the sixteenth-note rests between notes.

In most instances melodic shape is determined by the natural rise and fall of the line. In the section marked "Not too fast, with equanimity" (s.13), the right-hand line moves dynamically towards the B \sharp on the first eighth-note beat of this section's second measure.

Ex. 13: s.13



As previously mentioned, forearm rotation towards the B \sharp helps the performer to achieve the dynamic shaping of the line. The intensity then diminishes over the next four beats

as the line falls. Between beats six and nine, the performer may choose to increase and then decrease the intensity, a process which, when used in conjunction with rhythmic surprises, creates vitality. A variety of subtle changes in dynamics and articulation may be employed before m.2 of s.15 is reached. As in the previous example, the melodic line moves towards the first B⁴ in this measure, but this time the dynamic intensity should not diminish as the line falls. Instead the intensity should be maintained to the end of the measure through emphasis on the two-note slurs. Again, a downward impulse of the forearm for each pair of slurred notes will help to maintain the dynamic intensity of the line.

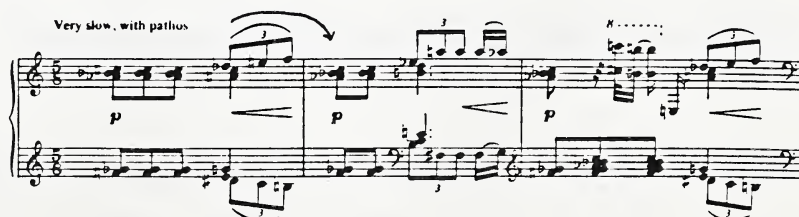
The same type of melodic and dynamic shaping should be used in the "Very fast, nimbly" section (s.32). This time, however, each hand has its own rising melodic line. The melodic line of the right hand progresses towards the E^b in m.2 and later towards the A^b in m.6 of this section. The entry of a similar melodic line in the left hand occurs one measure after the right-hand line. In the last four measures of s.34, the intensity of the line increases with the poco crescendo. The increased dynamic level will be more easily attained if the performer concentrates on releasing the forearm, thereby allowing it to vibrate in support of the hand's staccato action. The dramatic effect is even more greatly intensified by the subito pp of the following passage. In this passage the left hand now carries the characteristic

rising and falling line which should move towards the note E in both $\frac{6}{8}$ and $\frac{8}{8}$ measures. The right-hand octaves provide a strong rhythmical base.

Another example of the typical rising and falling action of the line occurs in the "Fast" section (s.55). The rhythmic articulation of the two-note slurs, combined with the appropriate crescendo and decrescendo, contributes to the vitality of this passage. The contrast between the dynamic level of this passage (*p*) and that of the passage which immediately follows (*f*) should be emphasized. The *f* passage, in contrast to the previous one, relies much more on the rhythmic impetus of the jazz syncopations.

In addition to maintaining dynamic intensity, the performer must also maintain the melodic sweep of the line. The line must always be carried forward across the bar line. For example, in the first measure of the "Very slow, with pathos" section (s.5), the triplets on the fourth and fifth beats should lead to the first beat of the next measure. The line should not stop with the triplets and begin again after the bar line.

Ex. 14: s.5



Legato touch and voicing of the uppermost line help the performer create motion by producing a horizontal listening procedure rather than a vertical one which may result in a syllabic style of playing. Legato connection of the repeated tone clusters at the beginning of each measure in s.5 is achieved through the use of arm weight. Through a controlled descent of the forearm, the fingers depress the keys and then remain in this position as the forearm, through the use of a flexible wrist, rises in preparation for the next chord. To effect the legato connection, the fingers then release the keys without allowing their complete vertical return, and almost instantaneously depress them again by means of the prepared forearm descent. In the triplets which follow, a legato connection is accomplished by the transfer of arm weight from finger to finger. Voicing of the upper line results from the support of arm weight by the outer part of the hand, that is, the third, fourth, and fifth fingers. A second example occurs in the lyrical *pp* measures of s.82.

Ex. 15: s.82



The phrase mark spanning mm.1-2 indicates the forward motion of the melody across the bar line to the note A[#]. Again it

is the transfer of varying degrees of arm weight from finger to finger which produces a subtly-shaped, legato, singing line. Handled "with the utmost delicacy," this passage is one of the most lyrical in the work.

An intensity which is more difficult to maintain across several bar lines occurs in the final phrase of the work (s.90). Beginning at a dynamic level of ppp, the line must continue to project meaningfully to the final note even as the sound diminishes.

C. Quasi-Improvisatory Elements

Apart from the most obvious suggestion of indeterminacy ($\%$), the work as a whole bears an improvisatory quality with its unmetered sections and constantly changing tempi and dynamics. The improvisatory nature is even more greatly emphasized by the contrasting metered sections. The performer should always strive to achieve an atmosphere of freedom and flexibility within the work.

More specifically, several improvisatory passages are notated with the symbol $\%$, which is explained as "repeat as often as desired." The performance of these passages should be spontaneous without regard to a specific number of repetitions. The lengths of the phrase-endings, therefore, will vary in each performance. Dynamic and/or tempo changes are also subject to the performer's mood of the moment.

The performer first encounters the symbol ‰ in s.2. One tempo should be maintained notwithstanding the possibility of a gradual ritardando before the fermata. The dynamics, however, may vary slightly while remaining within the pp range. Such subtle changes will be most effective if the notes of this passage continue to be clearly articulated. The same passage occurs in ss.6-7 with a definite number of repetitions. Its later appearances in ss.30 and 77 are again improvisatory and dependent upon the performer's inclination.

The symbol ‰ also appears in the "Dolefully" section in ss.24-25. The performer is given even greater freedom since the measure is marked with the term freely. Various possibilities such as accelerando, ritardando, crescendo, and decrescendo exist as a means to create an improvisatory effect. The passage is more easily accommodated through the use of forearm rotation, especially when an accelerando is applied. Each appearance of this figuration in ss.24 and 25 should differ from the other.

The fioritura-like passages of thirty-second notes occurring in the Epilogue, particularly in s.89, also provide an improvisatory effect. Even within the context of pp, every note must be clearly articulated and rhythmically precise.

D. Dynamic Range and Contrast

The work offers a wide range of dynamics from levels of

ppp to fff. Lesser dynamic levels are most often associated with the impressionistic and lyrical passages of the work while greater dynamic levels may be found in the percussive, brittle sections. Often opposing levels are juxtaposed, not only from section to section, but within a section or even a line. Sharply contrasting dynamics enhance the character of the work and contribute to the evocation of images and sounds which flicker and vanish in accordance with the title. The performer should exaggerate the dynamic levels to make contrasts even more effective.

The work begins and ends at a dynamic level of ppp as the sound emerges from nowhere and, after considerable development, then vanishes. The use of rhythmic inflections and pedal is essential in providing color and direction at this extreme dynamic level. The first section of the work ("Slow") hovers between the dynamic levels of ppp and p. When motives from this section later appear in ss.76-79, the performer should try to recapture the sounds and character of the opening. In the latter context, these sounds are an effective contrast to the fff climax of the preceding section. The last section of the work ("Not too slow, with composure") again hovers for the most part between the levels of ppp and mp, providing a structural balance to the ppp opening.

The climax of the work is played at a dynamic level at the other extreme, fff. Movement towards the climax begins in s.71 with the energetic and brittle ff tone clusters in

$\frac{6}{8} / \frac{8}{8}$ alternating meter. The dynamic level and speed of the passage require the full participation of the arm. Acting as a longer lever together with the hand, the arm increases the speed of the playing mechanism, causing the key to be depressed more quickly, thereby producing a greater dynamic volume. The brittle sound quality of the tone clusters results from the combined leverage of the arm and the hand, working together as one unit without a great amount of flexibility in the wrist. The continuous vibration of the forearm, initiated through a downward impulse, then accommodates the speed of the passage.

Similarly, the arm plays an important part in executing the right-hand octaves in ss.72-74 at a ff dynamic level.

Ex. 16: ss.72-74



Each group of octaves begins with a downward impulse initiated by the forearm which, in turn, assists the hand's quick movement in playing the repeated octaves. Octaves involving disjunct motion require a quick and precisely-timed lateral arm movement in which the weight of the arm is thrown to the receiving octave.

The repetition of the same chord in the $\frac{13}{8}$ measure (ss.75-76)¹⁹ begins the long dynamic ascent to the climax. The climax will be heightened if the performer begins the crescendo at a conservative dynamic level, somewhat less than the culmination of the previous crescendo. The swing of the whole arm towards the body will contribute to increased dynamic levels. The left-hand eighth notes produce a more brittle sound with the help of continuous arm vibrations per note rather than per beat. The use of pedal combined with the poco ritardando near the end of the measure also helps to achieve the fff dynamic level.

Intensity of sound in the ff passages of the work must be maintained. In the octave passage in ss.8-9, for example, the ff dynamic level must be sustained by both hands while allowing the rhythmic sweep of the passage to drive the melody

¹⁹The time signature in this measure should be $\frac{13}{4}$ rather than $\frac{13}{8}$. Incidentally, in her dissertation (pp. 111-112), Dorothy Lewis cites another error in the published score of Evanescents. The manuscript indicates an octave lower sign in the left hand, beginning on the last beat of s.66 and continuing through m.1 of s.67. This sign has been omitted in the final printed score.

to the final octaves. Forearm octave technique in which the drop and succeeding bounce of the forearm are kept in continuous motion will aid the evenness of the line. Greater continuity of line is assisted by the voicing of inner notes as the weight of each arm is supported by the thumbs.

Intensity is again required in the octaves occurring in ss.28-29. Played "with nobility," they must be strong, equal, and without any hint of diminuendo as the passage grows to a dynamic level of ff. By throwing the arm laterally, the large, double-octave leaps are secured while the dynamic level is maintained.

Dynamic intensity is more difficult to sustain in the melodic material between the $\frac{5}{8} / \frac{4}{8}$ and $\frac{6}{8} / \frac{8}{8}$ passages (s.41, m.5-s.44). The large leaps of both right- and left-hand lines must not inhibit the tempo or dynamic intensity of the passage. The use of forearm rotation and rhythmical down-beat accents will ensure the forward motion and intensity of this passage.

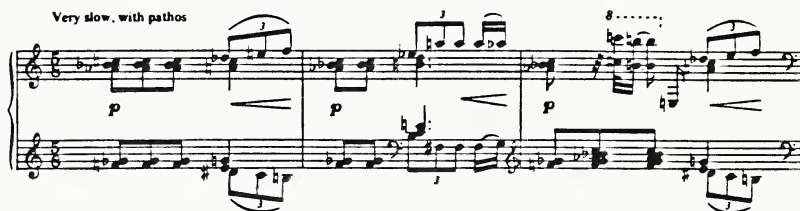
Finally, in some instances it is important to maintain the same amount of sound or intensity before a decrescendo occurs. In s.12, for example, to avoid the natural tendency of beginning at a lesser dynamic level, the performer must ensure that the right-hand melody begins first at mf and then at p before a decrescendo takes place each time.

Ex. 17: s.12



Subito pp is used for dramatic purposes in ss.35 and 45. The measure immediately preceding these passages must be played with increasing dynamics, thus intensifying the contrasting subito pp. Less obvious uses of subito p occur in s.5 where the crescendo is immediately followed by the p marking.

Ex. 18: s.5



The juxtaposition of contrasting dynamics, which continually changes the character of the work, takes place on three different levels. On a larger level, there is the juxtaposition of opposing dynamic levels from section to section. The "Very slow, with pathos" section (ss.5-10) ends at a dynamic level of less than p, and is abruptly followed by the f "Moderate, with éclat" section (s.10). A breath, taken before the latter section begins, enables

the performer to prepare physically for the new material. The tone clusters in the right-hand part require the use of the forearm and hand acting as one lever, particularly in the measures of $\frac{5}{8}$ where each detached eighth-note beat receives a forearm impulse.

Ex. 19: ss.10-11



The slurs of the left-hand inner melody suggest one forearm impulse per quarter note or dotted quarter note. Voicing of the top line in the right hand and the inner line in the left hand also better defines the melodic shape.

Dynamic contrasts also occur within sections as, for example, in the "Fast" section beginning in s.55. The emphatic f jazz statements are placed between melodic statements at a p dynamic level.

Finally, contrasts also occur within a line as, for example, in s.8 where f tone clusters are interspersed among pp motives from earlier material. The large leaps from octaves to tone clusters in the f interspersions should involve the use of the upper arm which will assist the forearm in spanning the distance in one quick lateral motion.

Ex. 20: s.8



E. Pedal and Sonority

Pedal is an effective tool in creating a variety of sonorities in Evanescents. It is used in the work for the collection of sound, the intensity or coloring of melodic lines and tone clusters, and as a support to increased dynamic levels. In some sections the use of pedal is specified, while in other sections its use may be determined by the performer. The una corda and sostenuto pedals may also be used.

In the opening section of the work, the extended use of pedal results in the collection of sound, thus creating impressionistic sonorities. Though only one pedal marking is designated in the passage of thirty-second notes (ss.1-2), clarity of line should not be sacrificed. The performer may experiment with varied amounts of sound and find it necessary to use flutter pedal to release some of the sound collected. The single melodic line which follows must pierce through

the sound remaining after the fermata. At the end of this lengthy pedal in s.3, the instruction to "lift pedal slowly" should be taken literally. Releasing the pedal too quickly interrupts the impressionistic atmosphere previously created. By releasing it slowly, the dampers do not immediately come into full contact with the strings, thus creating a special effect which ultimately leaves only the notes F and G sounding.

This passage, when it appears in varied form later in the work, is not pedalled in the same way. Pedal markings do not accompany its appearances in ss.6-7, 21-22, and 29-30. Sostenuato pedal may be used instead to sustain the left-hand chord preceding the thirty-second notes. Without the use of pedal, it becomes more difficult to control the sound and melodic progression of the thirty-second notes. Legato touch and even articulation are essential in creating the line. Flutter pedal may be added towards the end of the passage to help achieve a greater dynamic level. Full pedal may be used in the final appearance of this passage in s.77 as this section acts as a reminiscence of the opening rather than as developmental material.

Pedal may also be used for the collection of sound in the measures marked freely in ss.24 and 25. Again the performer should experiment with the amount of pedal required to enhance the sound.

Too much pedal must be avoided in m.1 of s.83. Flutter

pedal should be used towards the end of this measure to make the right-hand notes clear.

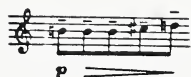
Ex. 21: s.83,m.1



Pedal used with certain tone clusters creates a more gentle and full sound as opposed to its use with other tone clusters designed to sound harsh and brittle. The tone clusters beginning in s.5, for example, may be pedalled, enriching the sound and enhancing the quality of pathos. Within the same section, the f tone clusters interspersed among pp tone clusters (s.8) should also be pedalled to give a full, rather than a brittle, sound. Pedal may also be used with the tone clusters in ss.28-29, again to create a full, "noble" sound. The octaves in this passage require careful syncopated pedalling to ensure that the thirty-second notes of each octave pair do not carry over to the eighth-note octave.

Pedal may be used to warm the sound and sustain the intensity of a melodic line. For example, when used with the five-note motive in s.4, the sound is warmed, and the legato quality of the line is enhanced.

Ex. 22: s.4



The creation of a legato line is further assisted through the use of arm weight. For the repeated notes (B^b), a flexible wrist accommodates the descent and succeeding rise of the forearm as it prepares for the next note. For the notes B^b, C[#], and D[#], a legato connection is effected through the transfer of arm weight from finger to finger. The use of pedal and arm-weight transfer may be applied to the same motive when it later appears in the left hand in s.22.

The use of pedal in the "Dolefully" section (s.23) greatly enhances the lyrical quality of the melodic line, although care must be taken to articulate the thirty-second notes clearly. Pedal in the final section of the work also heightens the quality of lyricism, particularly in the fioritura-like passages. The use of pedal in the last system of the work maintains the intense atmosphere and legato of the melodic line as the sound slowly disappears. The opposite intensification process occurs in the climax at the end of Section III. In this passage pedalling helps to raise the level of dynamic intensity to fff.

It is also possible to use the una corda pedal, perhaps at the beginning or the end of the work. This does not sug-

gest that its use acts as a crutch to achieve a dynamic level of ppp. The performance will be enhanced by the creation of various sound contexts, not excluding that created by the use of the una corda. The performer should experiment with all three pedals in a variety of acoustical situations to find the sound contexts which best suit the character of the work as suggested by the title.

IV. CONCLUSION

Evanescents is an imaginative work, inspiring the performer to create countless sounds and images which, in turn, spark the imagination of the listener. Representative of the twentieth-century period, it is characterized by strong melodic and rhythmic tensions which are not always resolved in a conventional manner. The listener's expectations, however, are fulfilled by the lyricism and rhythmic vitality of contrasting passages.

After examination of specific elements within the work, the performer's task lies in combining these elements into a cohesive performance, one which reflects the various contrasts without sacrificing the unity of the work. Such a performance requires the ultimate concentration of the performer. Physical details and motions related to the performer's use of the playing mechanism become automatic, allowing the performer to concentrate on the interpretation of the work. Certain interpretive skills, as studied in practise and discussed in this essay, also become automatic. What remains is the personal interpretation--those details which bring spontaneity to the performance and make each presentation a new experience. Even though most composers of twentieth-century music include more indications for the performer than do their predecessors, there remains an important role for the performer as a re-creative musician.

A rational approach to the integration of technique and interpretation in the performance of Evanescents provides the foundation upon which the performer may exercise the freedom to take the music beyond the boundaries of the printed score. The strength of the performance is determined by the conviction with which the performer delivers the music. The desirable result is a sensitive, meaningful performance which leaves an indelible impression upon the listener.

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